DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 470 793 CE 084 150

AUTHOR Maulding, Wanda S.

TITLE Emotional Intelligence and Successful Leadership.

PUB DATE 2002-10-00

NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration (Kansas City, KS, October 4-6, 2002).

PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Administrator Behavior; *Administrator Effectiveness; Adult Education; Adult Learning; Brain; *Emotional Intelligence; *Emotional Response; Intelligence Differences; Interpersonal Competence; *Leadership; Leadership Qualities; Leadership Styles; Learning Processes; Learning Theories; *Multiple Intelligences; Neurology; Neuropsychology; Postsecondary Education; Secondary Education; *Success

IDENTIFIERS *Goleman (Daniel)

ABSTRACT

Cognitive intelligence is often equated with eventual success in many areas. However, there are many instances where people of high IQ flounder whereas those of modest IQ do surprisingly well. Author and renowned psychologist Daniel Goleman believes that the explanation for this fact lies in abilities called "emotional intelligence," which include self- control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself. Studies conducted over past 20 years have established that, although our schools and cultures emphasize and reward academic intellect, academic intelligence does not guarantee prosperity. Studies of the brain's neurophysiology have established that the human brain has evolved from a primitive structure regulating basic life functions into a mass of complex tissues that permit people to think rationally and respond emotionally. The key to improving leadership lies in using both aspects of the brain effectively by learning how to utilize our emotions effectively or, in other words, by developing our emotional intelligence. Goleman has suggested the following domains for emotional intelligence: (1) knowing one's emotions; (2) managing one's emotions; (3) motivating oneself; (4) recognizing emotions in others; and (5) handling relationships. Although a certain level of cognitive intelligence "gets a person in the door," emotional intelligence is critical to becoming a successful leader. (Contains 22 references.) (MN)

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Wanda S. Maulding, Ed.D.
The University of Southern Mississippi

A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration in Kansas City, Kansas – October 2002

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Emotional Intelligence and Successful Leadership

Wanda S. Maulding, Ed.D.

University of Southern Mississippi

Introduction

George, an apparent leader and strong communicator as a child, grew up to be the CEO of a prominent Fortune 500 company. Not long after his rise in the organization, he needed the skills of a highly trained accountant. George picked up the phone and called the CFO and asked for the name of the most intelligent accountant on staff. The name was one of George's childhood classmates. George remembered the accountant as one of the top scholars in his old high school. He wondered how they had both ended up in the same organization, and how he, George, a student of moderate to average intelligence had ended up as CEO and Al had ended up punching a calculator.

In times past, and certainly even today, a high degree of importance on cognitive intelligence is equated with eventual success in many areas. Take for instance the well-known maxim that high marks on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) is a good predictor of success in graduate school.

"What factors are at play, for example, when people of high IQ flounder and those of modest IQ do surprisingly well?" Author and renowned psychologist Daniel Goleman believes these factors are attributed to abilities called *emotional intelligence* which include self-control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself" (Goleman, 1995).

Goleman, in his book entitled Emotional Intelligence – Why it can matter more than IQ shares many of his ideas as the result of scientific studies conducted over the last 20 years. Goleman purports that although a strong IQ can set the baseline for success in life, it in no way is a guarantee of prosperity. Academic intelligence, as Goleman shares "offers no preparation for the turmoil – or opportunity life's vicissitudes bring." Unfortunately, it is academic intellect on which we (society as a whole) focus and reward in our schools and cultures, (Goleman, 1995).

If we as humans were obligated to make decisions based on intellect alone, without the aid of our emotions, in many cases we would make very poor judgments. Further along in this paper, we will discuss the neurophysiological connectedness of the emotions in our brain and how without this connectedness people behave. It should, at that point be evident how our emotions, when intact improve our decision-making process. In that discussion, we will talk about our two minds and how they might work best together. For example, seeing the watery eyes of a colleague implies to the empathic understanding that a person is sad even in spite of her verbal message to the contrary. (Goleman, 1995). In Stephen Covey's national best seller The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (1989) readers are encouraged to *listen* with *empathy* (Covey, 1989), thus utilizing one of our basal senses through emotional intelligence. It is from this platform, the interaction of both minds, the intellectual with the rational, that a dialogue for the implications of leadership evolves.

Star performers, emphasized in Goleman's second work on emotional intelligence entitled Working with Emotional Intelligence, refers to those performers in an organization who not only get the job done, but rise to the top of their field while doing so. These 'star performers' are congenial, realistic, and optimistic. Not only do they have their fair share of cognitive intelligence, but they possess emotional intelligence as well. (Murray, 1998). The exciting part is that unlike IQ, emotional intelligence (EQ) can be learned. So, what exactly is emotional intelligence and how can I learn it?

What is Emotional Intelligence?

The question, 'what is emotional intelligence' must first be answered with a response about what it is not. Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is not some warm-fuzzy, quasi-science only to be appreciated or understood or appreciated by those in the field of tarot card reading, stargazing or some apocalyptic social psychology field. Emotional Intelligence, the softer side of our intelligences has considerable implications for the field of leadership. To connect those implications to leadership, a person must first understand what emotional intelligence is. From that context, we will begin by looking at the neurology of the brain and how our emotions drive much of our behavior, both personally and professionally.

To begin, let's look at a brief history of emotional intelligence. The beginnings of emotional intelligence as a science dates back to the early 1920's in the roots of 'social intelligence,' first recognized by E. L. Thorndike. Intelligences at that time were classified primarily into three groups, abstract intelligence, concrete intellegence and social intelligence. In his definition, Thorndike characterized social intelligence as 'the

ability to understand and manage men and women, girls and boys – to act wisely in human relations" (Thorndike, 1920).

More currently, psychologist and Harvard University professor Howard Gardner has identified seven distinct types of intelligence. In his book Frames of Mind (1983), Gardner disputed the idea that there was one all-encompassing intelligence quotient, but that many types of intelligence were essential for success in life. (Goleman, 1995). Among Gardner's seven intelligences were two intelligences that are the underpinnings of *emotional* intelligence. These intelligences, *intra*personal intelligence (one having a true understanding of oneself) and the other, *inter*personal intelligence (understanding others) both have implications for strong leadership. In fact, in that regard, Gardner defines interpersonal intelligence as "the ability to understand what motivates people to do work and how to work cooperatively with them" (Cornell University website, Sept. 2002).

In 1990, Mayer and Salovey defined emotional intelligence as a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to moitor one's own and other's emotions, to discriminate among them and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions. In his book, Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence, Mayer defines emotional intelligence as 'the capacity to reason with emotion in four areas: to percieve emotion, to integrate it into thought, to understand it and to manage it" (Mayer, 1999). Mayer further states that 'emotional intelligence broadens our understanding of what it means to be smart."

Most recently, Daniel Goleman defines emotional intelligence, as mentioned earlier, as a blend of Gardner's interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. Goleman

believes that "softer skills such as empathy, intuition, self- and social-awareness are what distinguish *great* leaders and *successful* companies" (Time Magazine). So, where do these 'softer' skills come from?

Is our brain truly divided into two regions – a thinking or rational brain, and a separate emotional one? If so, could we be more effective leaders by combining the strengths of each? We will begin to look at that notion with a brief lesson in the neurology of the human brain.

Neurophysiology of the Emotions

"The most primitive part of the brain, shared with all species that have more than a minimal nervous system, is the brainstem surrounding the top of the spinal cord. This root brain regulates basic life functions like breathing and the metabolism of the body's other organs, as well as controlling stereotyped reactions and movements" (Goleman, 1995). The emotional centers are also derived from this most basal part of the brain, the brainstem. The neocortex, or thinking brain as we know it now, evolved millions of years later from this root part, the great mass of complex tissues that make up the top layers. This relationship (that the 'thinking' brain has grown from the 'emotional' one) "reveals much about the relationship of thought to feeling; there was an emotional brain long before there was a rational one," (Goleman, 1995).

The neocortex is not only responsible for our rational thoughts, but it also coordinates the messages our senses deliver. The neocortex makes us a truly great thinking species, because not only can it synthesize our emotions, but it can even allow us to have feelings about our feelings (Goleman, 1995.)

In the more basal area of our brains, right above the brainstem are two structures known as the amygdala and the limbic system. It is in these structures (primarily) that our senses are housed. This has been evidenced over time as persons have for one reason or another had theses areas either detached or removed completely. Without these areas, a person can still think, but no longer has the emotional judgment to make sound decisions.

> "Lacking emotional weight, encounters loose their hold. One young man whose amygdala had been surgically removed to control severe seizurees became completely uninterested in people, preferring to sit in isolation with no human contact. While he was perfectly capable of conversation, he no longer recognized close friends, relatives, or even his mother, and remained impassive in the face of their anguish at his indifference. Without an amygdala he seemed to have lost all recognition of feeling, as well as any feeling about his feelings. The amygdala acts as a storehouse of emotional memory, and thus of significance itself; life without the amygdala is a life stripped of personal meanings" (Goleman, 1995).

As we read the above scenario, we may realize that we have 'feelings' about that situation. In some regards, we take great pride in this notion, that we 'feel' for others. But in other ways, sometimes our 'feelings' seem to disable us. How can we feel this obvious polarization about our emotions? If we return to the primal brain, where our emotional thought is housed, we can find that answer. Among the most basic of our thinking is the well known "fight or flight" mechanism. As you well know, the "fight or flight" mechanism is not something we rationalize about. We hear a gunshot, we hit the ground or run. We do not rationalize, 'what was that noise ... I believe it was a gunblast ... it might have been a car backfiring ... or someone dropping a book.' You are driving down a tree-lined country road and a deer bounds out immediately in front of your car. Do you think ... "should I try to dodge the deer to the left toward the center or the road

... should I slam on my brakes ... should I scream?" No, you react quickly. In scenarios like the above, we react first, then we begin to rationalize. On these occasions, our emotional brain actually temporarily 'hijacks' our rational brain. It is a necessary survival mechanism. At that point, there may not be time to rationalize what action to take. The primitive brain is not concerned with messing up the paint on your car, injuring the deer or whether or not a car backfired. The primitive brain, where our emotions are housed, is interested in the most primal of things. "Is this something I am afraid of?" When it is called upon to act, the response may be flight, or tears, or even hilarious laughter. To further complicate things, closely located to the amygdala are the centers for the hormone norepinephrine or adrenaline. You are frightened or aware that you must act or react rapidly so what does the amygdala do? It sends a rush of adrenaline straight to your brain. INSTANT and intense reaction.

So, let's take this rudimentary neurophysiology lesson a step further. Leave your thought about the basal brain behind and fast forward a few million years to the neocortex. The great neocortex is recognized to have four basic areas. The front part of that great mass is called the frontal lobe, located just above and behind your eyebrows. It is in this area that our working memory resides, where all our learning is stored.

> "All the emotional centers that control moods like anxiety or anger have very strong connections to the prefrontal areas. So, if a child is chronically anxious or angry or upset in some way, he experiences that as intruding thoughts. He can't keep his mind off the thing he is worried about. Now working memory has a limited attention capacity. So, to the extent that it is occupied by these intrusive thoughts, it shrinks what's available in working memory to think about what you are trying to learn. (Goleman, 1995).

Think of that in terms of professional productivity. You have a staff member designated to attend a new and highly technical software training. Just before this staff

member leaves to go to the training, she is confronted by a subordinate who is angry about a reduced payroll check. There is a heated discussion between the two of them prior to the time the staff member leaves to go to the training. You can readily see that the employee going to the training will not be as capable of learning all of the new training due to the fact that her emotional brain will be occupying so much of the space needed for learning.

You can begin to see the implications for learning how to effectively utilize our emotions. If the staff member that was just verbally attacked is able to acknowledge she just received an overdose of adrenaline, she can better begin to refocus her thoughts on the pending training. So, how does this knowledge lead to improving leadership? Well, the relationship plays out in several ways. First, let's define those.

Traits/Domains of Emotional Intelligence

In Goleman's second work on Emotional Intelligence entitled Working with Emotional Intelligence (1998), he suggests five domains for emotional intelligence. They are as follows:

1. Knowing one's own emotions. Goleman implies that self-awareness, that is recognizing a feeling as it happens, is the keystone to emotional intelligence.

   The phone rings at two o'clock in the morning. Your immediate reaction is fear. Something is wrong. You feel an immediate emptiness in your gut and hotness in your throat. That is emotion. Transfer that to the workplace. You call in a subordinate to discuss their habitual tardiness. They storm out of the room, slamming your office door. Your face gets hot as you jump to your feet. That is emotion.

2. Managing one's emotions. Handling feelings so they are appropriate. An *ability* that builds on self awareness.

You are on a flight headed back from a conference to your home. While you are reading a magazine, you feel the airplane take an incredible dive. Your face goes flush and your heart starts pounding. The adrenaline rushes. You realize that you were frightened by the surge and that it is probably brief turbulence.

3. Motivating oneself. Containing, ordering or controlling emotions while working toward a goal is critical for attention-paying, mastery and creativity. Being able to delay gratification and stifle impulses, having emotional self-control, underlies accomplishment of every sort.

   You're driving down the road and a beautiful candy-apple red Mercedes sports car rivets by. You imagine yourself as the driver. You think to yourself, driving any type of sports car would be nice. That afternoon, you stop by the auto lot and spot a little beauty. You notice the window decorated with a sale tag. You feel weak in the knees. You open the door and sit in the luxurious leather seat. As you put your hands on the wheel, your head is spinning. You must have this car. You realize your heart pulse has increased as you step away from the car. You look at the tag again and think … 'maybe next spring.'

4. Recognizing emotions in others. One of the most fundamental people skills is to have empathy, the ability to recognize other's feelings based on having had similar feelings yourself.

   Ever watched a good movie and gotten a lump in your throat or found yourself crying – or perhaps the opposite, laugh out loud hysterically? But, it's just on the screen, you tell yourself, it's not real. No, it's not real. But, perhaps you have had similar experiences and can closely relate. Had someone tell you about a chilling life experience and it raise the hair on your arm or the back of your neck? Perhaps you've had similar experiences. When you have and you can recognize more clearly how to relate to that person in that moment, you have created an intellectual bond with that person through emotional intelligence.

5. Handling relationships. Simply stated, "The art of relationships is skill in managing emotions in others."

   Ever had an angry adult in your office. So angry that they were at the point of tears? Did you get angry in return? Did the situation escalate? What about the opposite response? To remain calm in the face of that anger – would the other person also become calm?

Goleman's Thoughts

Goleman believes that a certain level of cognitive intelligence gets a person in the door, so to speak. As mentioned earlier, a certain level of GRE score along with other cognitive intelligence measures allows graduate students entry into academic programs of study. And although a baseline intellectual level is needed for success in any field, Goleman argues, with emotional intelligence a person can thrive. In Goleman's studies of approximately 500 organizations, people who score highest on measures of Emotional Intelligence* (or have what is called a high EQ), rise to the top of corporations (APA Monitor, July 1998).

Goleman would argue (and in fact has) in his interview in Educational Leadership (Sept, 1996), that "IQ contributes, at best, about 20 percent to the factors that determine life success. That leaves about 80 percent to everything else." Think of all the people you have known in a lifetime that were extremely intelligent cognitively, but were not successful in either their professional or personal lives.

Conclusion

So, how does Emotional Intelligence help one to be a successful leader? "People are beginning to realize that success takes more than intellectual excellence or technical prowess ... Internal qualities such as resilience, initiative, optimism, and adaptability are taking on a new valuation" (Goleman, 1998). Having a cognitively intellectual knowledge about one's emotional self is the beginning. It would be difficult to exhibit the other domains of emotional intelligence without this foundational intelligence in regard to oneself. Beyond that, building on the other competencies or domains,

(empathy, self-discipline, and initiative) has been proven to distinguish the most successful leaders from those who were only good enough to maintain their jobs (McClelland, 1973).

* A website with a brief test to determine your current EQ can be found at www.utpe.com/azEQ.tmpl

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